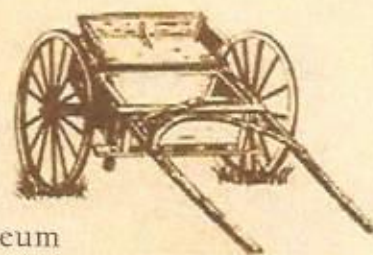


First Issue 2020 ~ Jan - March.
Next Issue April 2020

THE MAIL CART



Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum

President's Message

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone is enjoying a happy, healthy, and productive start to 2020. Last year was a spectacular one for the Simi Valley Historical Society at Strathearn Park. While it began with the Civil War Days event being rained out, the year quickly improved with, among other things: a "groovy" 1969-themed picnic to celebrate the City's 50th anniversary of incorporation; participation in the Park District's "spooktacular" Heritage Halloween event at Strathearn Park; an incredible Dia de los Muertos celebration; and a festive Holiday Open House which enjoyed outstanding attendance despite stormy weather that day. In fact, our 2019 events saw increased attendance over previous years, and membership in, and donations to, the Society increased. Furthermore, we were joined by new and active Docents and Volunteers.

We closed the year with two enjoyable social events: our annual General Membership Meeting/Dinner and our annual Holiday Party. The General Meeting/Dinner was remarkable for a couple of reasons: among others, we recognized City Historian, Museum Director, and one of the Society's four Founding Mothers, Pat Havens, and long-time Society member and Docent, Alicia Van Laar, for 50 and 40 years of service, respectively.

The BIG event of the year, of course, was reconstruction of the Printz/Powell Colony House. A bonus is that students in the woodworking classes at Royal and Simi Valley High Schools partnered to create replicas of the original finials to grace the rooflines of both houses! Photos and videos of the house reconstruction and other events are on our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark>

At our first meeting of 2020, the Board of Directors reviewed a schedule of events that will include and expand on our past successful events, and discussed establishing a program of projects for the year that will include fundraising to complete the interior of the Printz/Powell Colony House, reviewing and revising the Society's Bylaws, and more! Details of pending events will be published in upcoming email blasts, on our social media, via flyers, etc. We welcome the input and participation of all Society members in every step of these activities.

If you have ideas for fundraising and/or projects, and/or are interested in participating on a related sub-committee, please let us know by stopping by the Visitors Center the next time you're at the Park (I'm almost always there), calling the Park at 805-526-6453, or via email to simimuseum@sbcglobal.net.

In closing, I want to express the Board's most sincere thanks to and appreciation for the Volunteers and Docents who keep Strathearn Park beautiful, well-organized, and active! You are the heart, soul, and face of our organization, and we cannot thank you enough! We look forward to partnering with you on every exciting opportunity that 2020 will bring. As a point of personal privilege, I'd like to say that I am in awe of every one of you who dedicate time and energy to making the Park come alive as you work to preserve and share the history of our beloved community with others. I could not be more proud to be part of such an amazing organization and I thank you all!

Warmest Best Wishes,

Alex Walker

President, Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

"A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history." -Mahatma Gandhi



New Docents Needed for Our New Year!

A New Year brings thoughts of reflection on past habits, activities and often new ideas about how to become more involved in our community. If you, or someone you meet, is considering a meaningful local volunteer position, Strathearn Historical Park & Museum is a great place to check out!

Replacing the attrition of our volunteer base is an ongoing issue that requires constant vigilance in order to keep us staffed for all our educational and fun programs at the park. Volunteer training classes are held about two or three times a year, but recently we have been very successful in getting new volunteers involved and participating in many activities while waiting for the next scheduled class. This has been very helpful in the retention of new docents, as they have more time to get acquainted and learn more with each activity or meeting.

Prospective volunteers should be referred to our Board of Directors Member, Judy Pepiot, who for the past year has been acting as our "Navigator" for new volunteers. She is providing the screening-type process to assure the interested person understands job requirements, as well as being the constant contact for any questions during the pre-class training period. This process is one of the steps that has greatly reduced our dropout rate during or after classroom training. Judy can be reached at 805-578-0026 or judy-pepiot@sbcglobal.net

Volunteer applications are available on our website (under Volunteers) or paper copies are in the Visitor Center. Interested parties may contact Judy directly.

Your help is appreciated in keeping our volunteer needs well-staffed with eager, capable folks!

If you are interested please call the museum office at 805-526-6453 or email at simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

Welcome New Docents!

We'd like to welcome those who joined our volunteer family in 2019!

***Marie Garside, Julie Hanna,
Michael Langberg, Ayden Reimers
Jorge Sanchez, Carla Shaw,
Linda Winegrad, Tammy Wirtz,
Harry Wilson***

***Welcome! We are so happy
that you are part of our family!***



Chumash 1st Nations People

Simi Valley Residents since

17,000 years BP

Monthly 55 minute
presentation 4th Sunday each
month

1 - 2 pm

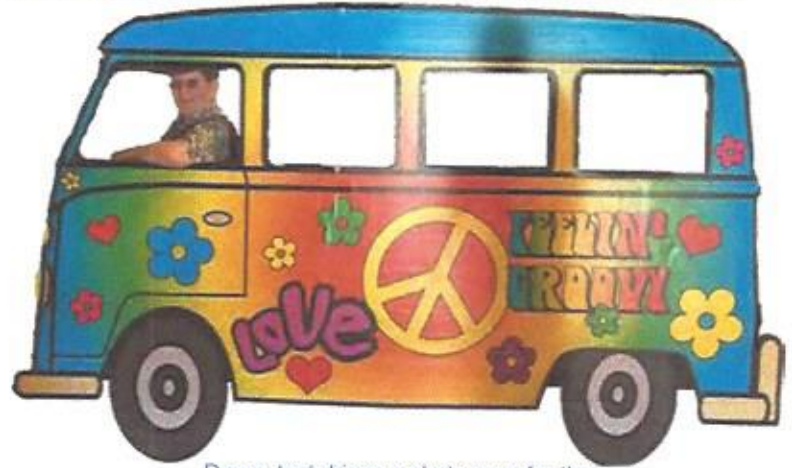
Strathearn Historical Park
Visitor's Center

'PRESIDENT'S AWARD'

The Simi Valley Historical Society will recognize one individual quarterly with the "Simi Valley Historical Society President's Award" for outstanding service and commitment to the Community, the Historical Society, Strathearn Park, or local history in general. This award will be given 4 times per year. Individuals can be nominated for the award simply by sending an email to Simimuseum@sbcglobal.net with the subject line *President's Award Nomination*; include who is being nominated and why.

This quarter we would like to recognize an outstanding docent and volunteer at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum, Danny Greenstreet.

Danny Greenstreet has been a docent at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum since November 2017 and hasn't let the grass grow under his feet.



Danny test drives a photo prop for the Historical Society's 1969 event!

After receiving Docent training, Danny immediately signed up for weekend duty and soon was welcoming guests and taking them on tours. His easy-going personality sets the visitors at ease so they are able to ask questions and enjoy themselves while out on the grounds. He also volunteers his time for other special events taking part around the park, such as special week day tours, Twilight Tours, Dia de los Muertos, and Civil War Days.

Recently, during last year's holiday season, Danny dropped by the Museum just in time to give the 1 o'clock tour that day. He wasn't scheduled, but he had a feeling that it was going to be a busy day, and that the docent scheduled to give the tour that day would need help. And...he was right! There were so many visitors that day that they each took a full tour of grateful visitors out. This illustrates perfectly the type of considerate, helpful person that Danny is!

Mark Your Calendars:

March 7th & 8th, 2020 - Civil War Days

**November 1, 2020 - Día de los Muertos
Celebration**

**November 6, 2020 -
Annual Membership Dinner Meeting at
Rancho Santa Susana Community Center**

December 6, 2020 - Holiday Open House

Danny also volunteers his time with the Mechanical Restoration group that meets every Monday at 9:00 am at the park to help restore equipment so future generations will have the benefit of knowing how things use to work 'back in the day.' His expertise has come in handy while performing body work repair and painting various Caterpillar 22 parts currently being revitalized.

Danny enjoys travel and world history, so taking people back in time is right up his alley.

Thank you, Danny, for always willing to step in when we need help around the park.



Keep an eye out for more events that are currently being planned! More details coming soon!

Pioneer Perspective

A Pioneer speaks by R.E. Harrington, from
Enterprise - Sun & News, Friday, January 24, 1969

R.E. Harrington was a pioneer who came to Simi Valley in 1907 and lived here the remainder of his life. He wrote one of the early history books about Simi Valley; Early Days in Simi Valley. He also wrote a column in the Enterprise Sun & News in the 1960s into 1970 called 'A Pioneer Speaks' that touched on many topics of interest regarding early Simi history. This article pays a visit to Simi's first 'subdivision,' the very first neighborhood which sprung up with the arrival of the Colony Houses!



First Simi high school, 1924

First high school here was burned down

Our letter is about what is now our Center Junior High (NOTE: The original Simi High building became Center Jr. High in 1963, and was a jr. high until 1972 when Hillside was built. It was demolished soon after that.)

Back in 1922 there was a very hotly contested election for building a high school in our valley. It carried and as a result our first high school was built.

One reason the election was so hotly contested was because it was certain that such a school would be built somewhere in the center of the valley and there were people both in Simi and in Santa Susana who voted against the high school for that very reason, thinking that it would lessen the value of property in either town.

Some even went so far as to say, "If they ever do build a school in the center of our valley, they will never use it, for someone will burn it down."

Someone did burn it down and although it was never proved who did it, those who saw the blaze first reported that gasoline appeared to have been sprayed all over the desks in the main auditorium.

It burned on New Year's night (NOTE: The fire took place New Year's Eve 1925) and since there was a party on that night at the church there were many hands to help throw much of the furniture out of the class room windows. This was greatly aided by its being only a one story building.



The aftermath after the fire that burned Simi High

The Graduates of 1924



MARGARET SILVA
Graduating in 1924, the first
graduate of Simi High.



MARGARET CANNELL
Graduating in 1924, the first
graduate of Simi High.

From what I have just said one would think the new high school was never used, but it was for a couple of years before it was burned down.

I have a picture of this first one story high school and I have recently located the first high school Pioneer Year Book showing Mr. Adamson the first Principal and our first two graduates, Margaret Silva and Margaret Cannell. The reason copies are hard to find is because several copies were burned in the fire.

As I write this letter I have before me a copy of the third volume of the Pioneer published in 1927. Among the pictures is one picture of the present Center Junior High when first built. It was located on the foundations of the first one story high school building, but this time made two stories high.

I have a picture of Mr. Miner and Mr. Pollock, our first high school principals in the two story building.



C. H. Pollock

Mr. Miner served for two years and Mr. Pollock for 18 years. During these years while Mr. Pollock was Principal we had four of our own children graduate and many from our Boy's Home.

Mr. Pollock was especially helpful in handling these boys. Another reason why we knew a lot about our high school was because Mrs. Harrington was a trustee of the school for 7 years.

To show how slowly the school grew I will name the number in each class as our four children graduated. There were nine in Arthur's class, 12 in Ross's, 12 in Bob's and 15 in Beth's.

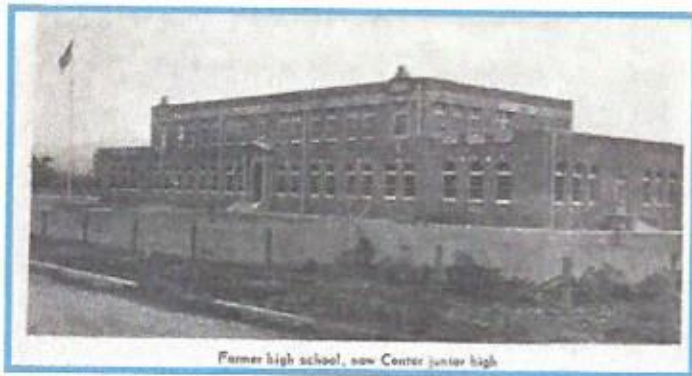
She says there would have been a few more except for the fact that a few of the boys enlisted before graduation.



L. W. Miner

It may be of interest to know that the land for the high school cost \$800 per acre – an unheard of price in those days. I could have bought the same land for \$100 per acre in 1907.

It may be of interest to know that just after the Long Beach Earthquake, the walls of the two story high school were reinforced with steel and concrete and pronounced safe against earthquake. Apparently the work done then was not considered safe according to present standards for I understand that the building is soon to be torn down and replaced with a modern building. That is my reason for writing this letter at this time, for it will soon be one of the old land marks gone forever.



Former high school, now Center junior high



Simi High in March 1954

Simi Valley Votes for High School District

This article was published in the Oxnard Daily Courier on Sept. 30, 1921. The vote to create a Simi Valley High School District was held on September 24, 1921.

Simi valley is to have a new high school district, to be comprised of the two grammar school districts known as the Simi and Susana districts. The election was held last Saturday and those favoring the new high school district won out by a vote of 141 to 86.

The site of the new high school district, for which a bond election will be probably held next year, is about midway between the Simi and Santa Susana, says the Moorpark Enterprise.

By the formation of this new district, this judicial township occupies a unique position in Ventura county and probably there is not a parallel in the state. The Simi township, with the exception of the Piru township, is the smallest in point of population of any township in the county, yet it is the only one embracing two high school districts.

On April 15, 1922 another election was held 'to incur a bonded indebtedness of \$65,000 to secure a site for and build a building for the school.' The site chosen for the school was not the one mentioned in the article, rather it was land purchased from L.F. Roussey. The school was dedicated in November 1923

Simi to Have Fine New High School

By a vote of 196 to 19, at the election held Saturday the voters of Simi Valley Union High school district voted to incur a bonded indebtedness of \$65,000 to secure a site for and build a building for the school.

The new high school district embraces the grammar school districts of Simi and Santa Susana. By districts the vote on the bond issue was as follows:

	For	Against
Simi	60	3
Santa Susana	21	12

The site tentatively chosen for the new high school is a ten-acre tract on the Bard ranch, about midway between Simi and Santa Susana.



HISTORY POLICE

In this exhilarating issue of **HISTORY POLICE** we'll talk about the **AMERICAN CIVIL WAR**...among other things.

Our Civil War Days event is coming up quickly. So...is that what this Valley looked like during the time of the Civil War? Battlefields? Cannons firing across the valley? Hoop skirts? **NO. NOT AT ALL.**

So, what was this Valley like during those years? What was going on in California? You may not think of California when you think of the Civil War, but there were pro-union and pro-secessionist forces that deeply divided the state.

Here is a very general time line partially excerpted from a much more extensive one titled **"THE CIVIL WAR IN CALIFORNIA"** compiled by the California State Department and Recreation. Local information in this time line is from Pat Havens' Time Line-Simí Valley (in red). This includes events before the Civil War, and events after which shaped Simí.

1795: El Rancho Simí Land Grant--The rancho was called San José de Altagracia y Simí, Santiago de la Cruz Pico received permission to occupy El Rancho Simí and use it as his own.

c1810: The Simí Adobe was built. This still stands at Strathearn Park. It is the oldest structure in Simí.

1820-1830: El Rancho Tapo came to be noted as a separate site, though it was part of El Rancho Simí. The Tapo Adobe was built during that decade.

1821: El Rancho Simí was re-granted to Patricio, Francisco Javier and Miguel Pico, sons of Santiago Pico, who had died in 1815. [They did not receive the original 1795 grant, as stated in some early history accounts].

1822: Mexican Independence from Spain had little effect on El Rancho Simí.

1827: Population at El Rancho Simí was 19 people. Eight were adults.

1831-1832: Rafael Pico sold Simí Rancho to José de la Guerra.



José de la Guerra

1849: California Gold Rush – Thousands rushed to California and many rapid changes began. The gold rush caused a great demand for cattle. José de la Guerra's ranchos flourished.

September 9, 1850: California joined the Union and became a state.

1850: There was a high production of cattle on Rancho Simí earning \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually.

December 1856: The U.S. 1st Cavalry moved its headquarters to Ft. Tejon.

1858: José de la Guerra died.

1858–1860: Francisco de la Guerra lived at the Simí Adobe, still headquarters for El Rancho Simí.

June 1860: Construction began on the Santa Susana Pass Stagecoach Road.

November 6, 1860: United States: Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States. California's four electoral votes went to Lincoln, even though he only received 32% of the total popular vote.



Scaling the Devils Slide - William A. Razanski, 1986

[1861-1865: U.S. CIVIL WAR]

April 6, 1861: In the Santa Susana Pass, the first overland mail stagecoach traveled along the Santa Susana Stagecoach Road, establishing the new route between Los Angeles and San Francisco. News of the Civil War took 20 to 30 days to reach Simi Valley by the Coastal Stage, the main line of which went through Simi Valley.

1861: The coastal stage route passed through Simi Valley until 1875. The local stations and stops were Larry's Station at the foot of the Santa Susana Pass, Simi Adobe and the "Simi Station which was at the junction of Moorpark and Tierra Rejada Roads" as per historian Charles Outland.

1862-1864: Extreme drought years in Simi and many cattle died.

December 19 1862: General Wright requested authority to raise four companies of 'native' (Californio) cavalry in the Los Angeles District. January 20, 1863 Secretary of War gave authority. Officers could not speak the language of the country they were prepared to defend. Like many other California units did, the native cavalry

acted in the absence of the Regular Army. **Simi Valley Connection:** Two of the four companies had a Simi connection. Company A was commanded by José Ramon Pico, a nephew of Andres Pico, grandson of Santiago Pico, original recipient of the Simi Rancho land grant. Capt. Antonio Maria de la Guerra, son of Don José de la Guerra, the second owner of El Rancho Simi commanded Company C.

November 19, 1863: Gettysburg, PA: At the dedication of the new Soldier's National Cemetery at Gettysburg, President Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg Address.

1864: Isaac Cook was given deed to El Rancho Simi as a result of the sale of El Rancho Simi land due to non-payment of mortgage debt to him by the de la Guerras. Some deceptive practices were undertaken by American investors to wrest control of land from Spanish landholders.

1865: A land patent confirmed the de la Guerra claim to Rancho Simi under the Land Act of 1851. José de la Guerra had already died. The sons soon lost the remainder of their Rancho Simi land because of mortgages during the bad years of drought and poor management of finances.

1865: The Rancho Simi was purchased by eastern land investors headed by Thomas A. Scott of Pennsylvania. Thomas R. Bard, a man in his twenties, was hired to manage Scott's affairs.

April 9 1865: Appomattox, VA: General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses S. Grant at the home of Wilmer McLean in Appomattox. Soon, other Confederate Generals followed suit, making the Southern defeat complete.

April 14 1865: Washington, D.C.: United States President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theatre, Washington, D. C.

August 31 1865: Washington, D.C.: The US Federal government estimated that the American Civil War had cost about \$8 billion. Human costs have been estimated at more than one-million killed or wounded.

1880s: In the mid 1880s, the de la Guerras finally lost their hold on the Tapo property. In 1885 The Tapo Ranch was offered for sale in Ventura County newspapers.

1887-1888: The formation of the Simi Land and Water Company, headed by Thomas Bard; they started the first land division and offered the Rancho Simi land for sale.



Antonio Maria de la Guerra



Land offered for sale after the formation of Simi Land and Water Company

Civil War Days at Strathearn Park Coming SOON!

Strathearn Historical Park will transform itself into a small town in rural America in the 1860s for the 9th Annual Civil War Days Encampment on March 7 -10am-4pm and March 8 - 10am-3pm.

Step back to another place and time, when President Lincoln could take a break from his Washington duties to give a speech on the steps of our Strathearn House. Here, costumed civilians, as well as soldiers from the north and south stand ready in their camps, eager to tell their stories to the passing visitors. Sergeants drill groups of local boys and girls curious to experience military life. Skirmishes, as well as artillery, infantry and cavalry demonstrations will take place throughout the weekend.

Highlights include:

- President Lincoln delivers his Gettysburg Address
- General Ulysses S. Grant & General Robert E. Lee reenact the Surrender at Appomattox
- Kids wanted as recruits – come early & enlist, plus interview a soldier
- Food for sale from Ventura BBQ & Cocteles la Princesa
- Experience Authentic Artillery, Infantry & Cavalry Demonstrations
- Enjoy a 1860s Women's Clothing Demonstration (Saturday Only)
- Tour historic Simi houses & buildings beginning at 12pm each day
- Historical Demonstrations: Civilian Encampment, School Room, Newspapers, Apothecary & more
- See Master Blacksmith, Ken Kurtz, demonstrate his trade
- Folk songs performed by strolling minstrels, the Slackjaw Brothers
- Shop Civil War Era Items at Simi Store & on Sutlers Row offer unique treasures

Presale Adult Tickets: \$5 on-line tickets at www.simihistory.com BUY PRESALE TICKETS AND SAVE!

Daily Admission at the Gate: \$7 age 13 and up ~ \$3 kids 5 to 12 ~ FREE: age 4 and under
\$5 active/retired military with ID.

Participant Information

Participation fee \$5 for all military and civilian participants.

Re-enactors planning to camp on site must have a confirmation from the Civilian coordinator or Civil War Coordinator due to limited space at the site. Please visit event page on www.simihistory.com for contact info.

All vendors/sutlers, historical displays,etc. must contact and receive a confirmation from Civil War Days chairperson (Linda Bosley) due to limited space at the site.

For more information please visit: Civil War Days: www.simihistory.com



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Strathearn Historical Park & Museum

Historian	Pat Havens
Park Coordinator	Carolyn Valdez
Admin. Asst.	Louise Kaul

Docent Led Tours: Saturdays & Sundays: Between the hours of 1 & 4 pm

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays: One tour at 1 pm

Donation: \$3 for Adults, Simi Valley Historical Society Members are Free

We are a Blue Star Museum - Active Duty Military Personnel and Families are Free

Week day Park Hours: Monday - Friday

9 am - 3 pm

For information please call (805) 526-6453

Email: Simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 940461

Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461

www.Simihistory.com

www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark



Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum
Located at Strathearn Historical Park & Museum
137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley, CA 93065



The Mail Cart is sent quarterly to all current members. The Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum's membership year runs from January 1 through December 31.

The Mail Cart is electronically being sent to all members with an email address on file. If you are receiving a 'paper copy' of the Mail Cart and would like to receive it via email (*there are extra articles in the electronic version!*) please send us your email address. Any changes to your email address should be included to continue receiving the electronic Mail Cart! If you do not have an email address, or have requested a printed copy of the Mail Cart, the postal service will continue to deliver your copy. Questions regarding your membership? Call our business office at 805 526 6453 or email simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

Name _____

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(Payment Mailing Address) PO Box 940461, Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461

Please select desired membership.
Make checks payable to SVHS&M

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|--|------------|
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